

Child Care and Preschool Pandemic Influenza Planning Checklist



A pandemic is a global disease outbreak. A flu pandemic occurs when a new influenza virus emerges that people have little or no immunity to and for which there may be no vaccine. The disease spreads easily person to-person and causes serious illness. It can sweep across the country and around the world very quickly. It is hard to predict when the next flu pandemic will occur or how bad it will be.

Childcare and preschool programs can help protect the health of their staff and the children and families they serve. Interruptions in childcare services during an influenza (flu) pandemic may cause conflicts for working parents that could result in high absenteeism in workplaces. Some of that absenteeism could be expected to affect personnel and workplaces that are critical to the emergency response system. The Minnesota Department of Health has adapted the following checklist from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). This checklist was developed to assist programs prepare for the effects of a flu pandemic. Many of these steps can also help in other types of emergencies. More information on pandemic flu is available at :

<http://www.health.state.mn.us/divs/idepc/diseases/flu/pandemic/index.html> and www.pandemicflu.gov.

1. Planning and Coordination:

Tasks	Not Started	In Progress	Completed
• Form a committee of staff members and parents to produce a plan for dealing with a flu pandemic.			
• Include members from all different groups your program serves. Include parents who do not speak English who can help contact other non-English speakers in the community. Staff of very small programs might consider joining together with other similar programs for planning.			
• Assign one person to identify reliable sources of information and watch for public health warnings about flu, school closings, and other actions taken to prevent the spread of flu.			
• Learn who in your area has legal authority to close child care programs if there is a flu emergency			
• Learn whether the Minnesota Department of Health and local/ health departments and agencies that regulate childcare have plans. Be sure your flu plan is in line with their plans. Tell them if you can help support your community's plan.			
• Identify all the ways a flu pandemic might affect your program and develop a plan of action. (For example, you might have problems with food service, transportation, or staffing.)			
• Encourage parents to have a "Plan B" for finding care for their children if the program is closed during a flu pandemic. Give them ideas about where they might seek help based on your knowledge of the local childcare community.			
• Work with those in charge of your community's plan to find other sources of meals for low-income children who receive subsidized meals while in your care. (For example, locate food pantries and meals on wheels and voluntary organizations.)			
• Learn about services in your area that can help your staff, children, and their families' deal with stress and other problems caused by a flu pandemic.			
• Stage a drill to test your plan and then improve it as needed. Repeat the drill from time to time.			
• Consider volunteering to help in tests of community plans.			
• Talk to other childcare and preschool programs in your area to share information that could make your plan better. Discuss ways programs could work together to produce a stronger plan and pool resources.			

2. Student Learning and Program Operations:

Tasks	Not Started	In Progress	Completed
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Plan how you would deal with program closings, staff absences, and gaps in student learning that could occur during a flu pandemic. 			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Plan ways to help families continue their child's learning if your childcare program or preschool is closed. (For example, give parents things they can teach at home. Tell them how to find ideas on the Internet. Talk with childcare resource referral agencies or other groups that could help parents continue their child's learning at home.) 			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Plan ways to continue basic functions if your program is closed. (For example, continue meeting payroll and keeping in touch with staff and student's families.) 			

3. Infection Control Policies and Actions:

Tasks	Not Started	In Progress	Completed
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Give special attention to teaching staff, children, and their parents on how to limit the spread of infection. (For example, use good hand washing; cover the mouth when coughing or sneezing; clean toys frequently.) Programs should already be teaching these things to build habits that protect children from disease. See: www.cdc.gov/flu/school www.healthykids.us/cleanliness.htm http://www.health.state.mn.us/divs/idepc/dtopics/infectioncontrol/cover/ http://www.health.state.mn.us/handhygiene/index.html 			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Keep a good supply of things you will need to help control the spread of infection. (For example, keep on hand plenty of soap, paper towels, and tissues.) Store the supplies in easy-to-find places. 			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tell families that experts recommend yearly flu shots for all children 6 months to 5 years old and for anyone who cares of children in that age range. See: www.cdc.gov/od/oc/media/pressrel/r060223.htm 			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Encourage staff to get flu shots each year. See: www.cdc.gov/flu/protect/preventing.htm 			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tell parents to let your program know if their children are sick. Keep accurate records of when children or staff are absent. Include a record of the kind of illness that caused the absence (e.g., diarrhea/vomiting, coughing/breathing problems, rash, or other). See: http://nrc.uchsc.edu/CFOC/XMLVersion/Chapter_3.xml 			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teach staff a standard set of steps for checking children and adults each day as they arrive to see if they are sick. Make it clear that any child or adult who is ill will not be admitted. See: www.healthykids.us/chapters/sick_main.htm 			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Have a plan for keeping children who become sick at your program away from other children until the family arrives, such as a fixed place for a sick room. See: http://nrc.uchsc.edu/CFOC/XMLVersion/Chapter_3.xml 			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Require staff members to stay home if they think they might be sick. If they become sick while at the program, require them to go home and stay home. Give staff paid sick leave so they can stay home without losing wages. 			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Require ill staff and students to stay at home until their flu symptoms are gone and they feel ready to come back to work. 			

4. Communications Planning:

Tasks	Not Started	In Progress	Completed
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Have a plan for keeping in touch with staff members and students' families. Include several different methods of contacting them. (For example, you might use hotlines, telephone trees, text messaging, special Websites, local radio and/or TV stations.) Test the contact methods often to be sure they work. 			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Make sure staff and families have seen and understand your flu pandemic plan. Explain why you need to have a plan. Give them a chance to ask questions. 			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Give staff and students' families reliable information on the issues listed below in their languages and at their reading levels. 			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How to help control the spread of flu by hand washing/cleansing and covering the mouth when coughing or sneezing. See: www.cdc.gov/flu/school/ http://www.health.state.mn.us/divs/idepc/dtopics/infectioncontrol/cover/ http://www.health.state.mn.us/handhygiene/index.html 			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How to recognize a person that may have the flu, and what to do if they think they have the flu. See: www.pandemicflu.gov 			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How to care for ill family members. See: www.hhs.gov/pandemicflu/plan/sup5.html#box4 			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How to develop a family plan for dealing with a flu pandemic. See: www.pandemicflu.gov/planguide/ 			